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Who remembers post-punk women?

Who remembers post-punk? Its cultural and musical presence in the late 1970s and early 1980s is often celebrated by many, in spite of the numerous hardships British society faced. From industrial disputes and strikes to anti-Thatcherism and youth unemployment, it was a transitional time in British history. How do we remember post-punk? Established since the 1940s, memory work and oral histories provide opportunity for this, though they simultaneously raise a multitude of issues, not least from terminology. 'Individual memory' and 'collective memory' both allow for misrepresentations, though Sara Jones (2017) contends that the latter 'requires actors, both individual and institutional, to construct, transmit, and support particular narratives of the past.' (Jones 2017: 28). It is hence paramount to ask: *who* has been *permitted* to remember? When considering memory alongside gender identity and post-punk, one can observe some of the opportunities it afforded women, yet debate continues to contest their 'empowerment' and 'increased' representation in popular music. Historically much memory work has been conducted by women, whilst oral histories of punk and post-punk have predominantly been written by men. Ultimately, this article examines the memory and representation of women through semi-structured interviews, revealing anecdotal nostalgia of post-punk by members of what was termed Generation X (those born between 1955-75).

Keywords

gender, memory, nostalgia, agency, oral history, post-punk, identity

Introduction and Rationale: Memories of Whom?

Memory is a peculiar phenomenon. When memory work and oral histories were established in research in the 1940s, (Thomson 1998: 179) a multitude of issues arose, not least with the umbrella term 'collective memory,' often viewed as indistinguishable from *individual* memory, risking misrepresentations of those individual people and of society's 'memories'. To unravel just how and why such misrepresentations may have occurred, it is paramount to ask: *who* has been *permitted to remember*?

There are many important reasons to dedicate studies to women, as Parry (2013) argued of the history and significance of feminism. Parry noted that, 'women [have] encountered unique struggles that need to be addressed' and that 'female [leisure] studies have made womens' lives visible' (Parry 2013: 574). This is key to the research: allowing women a voice. It aims to add to research which is increasingly being undertaken, to 'question the gendered context of women and men's experiences' (Parry 2013: 576). The selection of punk and post-punk is not coincidental, for its DIY ethos afforded women entry to the music industry, as O'Meara argues in relation to punk's 'self-expression and its immediate availability' (O'Meara 2003: 303). Though it would be too generalist to claim that women's limited participation in the music industry has essentially excluded them from history, only in the last decade have studies appeared which commemorate them. This is largely due to a dominant narrative constructed by a wealth of literature since the late 1970s centred on male oral histories: *England's Dreaming* (Savage 1991), *No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs* (Lydon 1994), *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (McNeil & McCain 1996), *A Riot of Our Own* (Green & Barker 1997) and *Punk Rock: An Oral History* (Robb 2006). These examples, however, were accompanied in the 1990s and 2000s with some notable texts which examined women's position in the music industry and in particular punk. Texts such as *Sexing the Groove* (Whiteley 1997), *The Lost Women of Rock Music* (Reddington 2007), and *Gender in the Music Industry* (Leonard 2007) highlighted areas where women throughout history negotiated the discourse of rock, including recollective interviews by women. Some of the chapter topics raised issues this article (framed by memory) hopes to further address such as: societally prescribed gender roles and notions of femininity, patriarchy and the gender order, and language used to describe women by the music press. The primary aims of this article are hence to examine both the memory and historical representations of women, music and the post-punk era through the voices of twenty members of Generation X (termed in this article as born between 1955-75).

More and more Memory: After the 2000s

Further memory work of women in the last ten years has taken the form of memoirs or autobiography, such as: *Typical Girls?: The Story of the Slits* (Howe 2009), *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes. Music, Music, Music. Boys, Boys, Boys* (Albertine 2014), *Girl in a band* (Gordon 2015), and *Reckless: My Life as a Pretender* (Hynde 2015). This article hopes to contribute to a body of literature surrounding the memory of women in music and in particular of women's experience of punk and post-punk. Significant to this research, therefore, are the ways that notions of identity, gender, music and post-punk have been remembered and continue to be remembered. When examining memory work and research studies in particular (which have been conducted across numerous sociological fields) it is notable that they have been largely conducted and written by women (Giles 2002; Green 2004; French 2012; Jones 2017). This does not feel coincidental; why should men challenge a system or history in which they appear so prominently?

Historically however, many studies in memory work hinge theoretically upon French sociologist Maurice Halbwach, who defined collective memory as 'collectively shared representations of the past,' and disregarded the individual as a tangible source of memory (Kansteiner 2002: 181). Whilst mostly contested, some historians have agreed, stating that individual memories are unimportant due to their lack of agency (Green 2004: 37). Halbwach maintained, however, that individuals remember through 'dialogue with others within social groups' and suggested that less popular individual memories are subsumed within a dominant narrative. Of what, then, is the "dominant narrative" memory of women and post-punk? More importantly, who has had agency to tell such tales?

Giles (2002) argues that agency regarding memory is salient, as it inherently affords a construction of identity, and 'storytelling,' where one can draw upon raw material to 'compose' a 'sense of self.' She asserts that what is *omitted* from someone's 'story' is equally important to what is included; for this selection process is not random and is deliberately constructed (Giles 2002: 25). Additionally, despite the many debated terminologies memory studies have amassed over time, historian Thomson (1998) argued that 'collective memory' cannot be history, as the phenomenon of the collective only actually manifests itself in the actions and statements of *some* individuals, rendering all memories mediated (Thomson 1998: 180). In agreement, Jones (2017) contended that collective memory 'requires actors, both individual and institutional, to construct, transmit, and support particular narratives of the past' (Jones 2017: 28). She included Elisabeth Jelin's descriptions of such actors, as, 'memory entrepreneurs... who by virtue of their power, influence, status... have an impact on public interpretations and understandings of the past' (Jones

2017: 28). By this definition, who then might be suggested for post-punk as an actor of the 'dominant narrative'? This raises further questions regarding how this has been achieved by said actors and importantly how gender has been aligned within these 'narrativised life stories' (Lohman 2017: 10).

Post-punk 'Memories', Nostalgia, and Gender

As with memory, nostalgia has been equally debated for its veracity, with a number of authors (Niemeyer 2014; Kalinina 2016) denouncing a rose-tinted picture of the past. Others have argued that it trivializes history and affords opportunity for stereotyped representations of the past to occur (which have the ability to perpetuate) (Jameson 1998). Yet it is still important to anticipate meaning, whether these nostalgic memories are even slightly superficial, as it is the meaning to that audience member or listener that is significant (Hoeven 2018: 242).

Contemplating nostalgia and stereotyped representations of memories for a moment; consider this. What is the stereotype or standard 'punk rocker'? Safety pins, swastikas, Sex Pistols and working-class youth revolting against the establishment? A multitude of texts denote it as such. 'Punks wore their politics on their chests as well as their sleeves (those swastika armbands)' (Sirc 1997: 19). Crossley described, 'clothes were often ripped and safety pins loomed large,' (Crossley 2008: 93). Pinkus highlighted that the Sex Pistols 'No Future' anthem had 'lyrics [that] made an absolute equivalency between the British Monarchy and fascism' (Pinkus 1996: 191). Additionally, Hebdige's examination of subculture places punk as largely a working-class phenomenon (Hebdige 1991: 37). Some authors have argued otherwise, by terming middle class punk bands as punk art. Reynolds (2006) referred to a host of Leeds University and Leeds 'Poly' based bands as from a 'Fine Art Department, which spawned Gang of Four, the Mekons and Delta 5' (Reynolds 2005: 110). And while literature does not generally refer to punk and post-punk as a working class *male* subculture, or scene (Lohman 2017: 24), or movement (Crossley 2008: 90), the term 'women in music' has often been used (for example on the front cover of the *New Musical Express* in March 1980); linguistically suggestive of territorial marking which excludes female participation with music (discussed further by Whiteley 1997: 56-57).

The Sex Pistols have undoubtedly gained 'actor' or 'memory entrepreneur' status, carrying the torch for what many seem to think punk 'is' or 'was', even beyond British history. Kirsty Lohman (2017) discussed punk's manifestation in the Netherlands, catalysed by 'international bands such as the Sex Pistols' (Lohman 2017: 4). She impressed however, that Dutch punk did not simply imprint from the British "version", instead taking on 'new forms and meanings, shaped by

[Dutch] locality' (Lohman 2017: 5). Other studies such as Bennett and Guerra (2015) have considered the Sex Pistol's cultural and economic impact, as well as the dissemination of punk in a non-English speaking country. Gelbart (2011) notes the Sex Pistol's 'actor' status, musing that 'There were (and still are) people who believe passionately that the brief time in which the Pistols shined more or less was punk' (Gelbart 2011: 232). If this is indeed the dominant narrative memory of punk and post-punk, how might women and the concept of gender be considered in alignment with this?

Yet studies of gender, as with memory, have also faced issues with terminology, as problematised by Hird (2000), 'sex [is] biological differences between women and men, whereas gender [signifies] the practices of femininity or masculinity in social relations' (Hird 2000: 348). Some of these 'practices' are exemplified by Bayton (1997) in her discussion of "gendered" musical instruments: 'as girls grow up, they learn how to be "feminine" [...] playing the flute, violin, piano [...] whilst the electric guitar is "masculine" (Bayton 1997: 39). This association extends to genre and musical style, as Bayton asserted regarding electric and acoustic guitars, the latter more associated with the 'singer-songwriter' or 'folk artist' position (Leonard 2007: 91). Her views synchronise with Coates' belief that gender is socially inscribed and consequently performative (Coates 1997: 52). These views question not only how such gender expectations were negotiated by post-punk women, but also the double-edged-sword post-punk seemed to possess for women – of entry and liberation, yet often automatic judgements of violating gender norms. O'Meara positively agreed that '[post-punk's] effects [...] [allowed] female voices to be heard [...] [and allowed] women [to understand] themselves as creators' (O'Meara 2003: 303). However, it has been well documented that post-punk women who challenged gender norms were considered to be "subversive," with examples including the Raincoats, the Slits and Siouxsie Sioux. These women enacted oppositional and subversive behaviours to varying degrees; both musically and in relation to physical appearance (O'Meara 2003: 304; Reynolds 2005: 123; Leonard 2007: 91). This increased breaking of gender norms also encouraged group action such as network Riot Grrl, who aimed to 'critique the masculine culture of indie rock music and the wider music industry' through their 'Girls at the front policy!' (Leonard 2007: 119-120). Albeit later than this article's focus (circa 89-91) Riot Grrl 'signalled [its] allegiances to post-punk subculture' (Leonard 2007: 116) through its usage of DIY, which aimed to: 'set up networks of communication and offer new modes of female expression' (Leonard 2007: 125). Examples such as this support the memory and representations of women, although it is worth noting that the British tabloid media at the time referred to Riot Grrls as 'screaming brats' (discussed further by Leonard, 2007: 126). Most significantly, it is

perplexing to consider how these public acts of “subversion” and “oppositional” gender norms by female post-punk musicians are *remembered* by society; and especially by Generation X, whose youth it reflects.

Methodology

The methodological approach taken in this study was situated in qualitative research, as well as being interpretative in nature. Interpretivism, rather than positivism, was pertinent to this research because of its concerns with the lived experiences of respondents’ memories. What was key to the findings were respondents’ memories and experiences of post-punk (in the UK) during 1978-1984; a time period selected due to its significance as transitional in British history (Reynolds 2005: 110). The study was conducted with two methods selected; discourse tracing and semi-structured interviews, of which the latter will be reported on in this article. The semi-structured approach was chosen to afford participants the opportunity to expand on their memories during the interview if they wished.

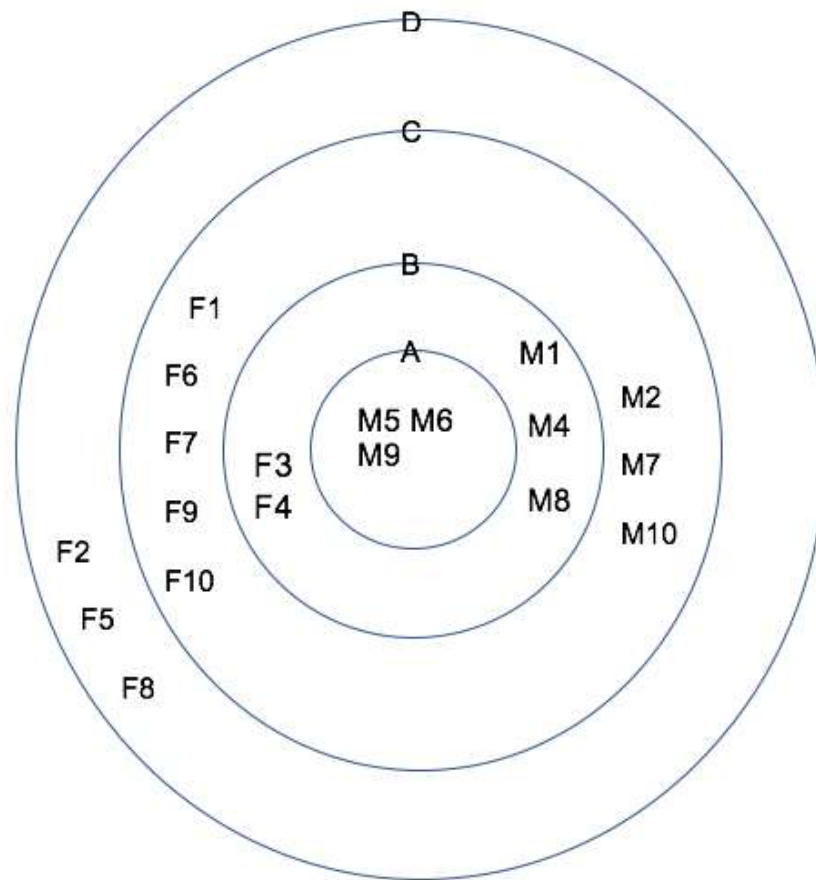
A target sample size of twenty interviews was set to obtain sufficient data to conduct analysis. A snowball sample was utilized to invite participants, and participant information was provided to all potential respondents to ensure they fit the only criteria: age (born between 1955-75 inclusively, termed as Generation X), and the ability to recall their memories and experiences of post-punk circa 1978-1984. The sample was hence a nonprobability purposive sample. Importantly, both male (n = 10) and female (n = 10) participants were interviewed, to transcend some of the assumptions that would inevitably be made if only women were to participate. These included: to avoid missing an opportunity to present, highlight, and raise awareness of a much larger system of patriarchy to both men and women, to confront the stereotyped notion that *only* women can be feminists, and to allow opportunity for both sexes to declare how they feel about the representation of women in the memory of post-punk. The use of snowball sampling afforded a significant number of benefits to this study; and the twenty participants interviewed each emerged from differing geographical demographics, social classes, political stances and musical experiences. This availed a range of rich data to enlighten about the musical and cultural experiences of post-punk by a small set of Generation X. Though minimal criteria were set to invite participants to the study, there were still two participants who despite reading the participant information were unsuitable for the study as they could not recall post-punk. On completion of the twenty (successful) interviews, transcription and thematic analysis took place.ⁱ

Results and Discussion

Memories were examined for a number of themes, such as terminology. How do participants term and describe post-punk, what does it mean to them and how do they recall it from their memory? Further to examine was gender, in addition to gender identity and differing manifestations of femininity. This included both participants' own experiences (applicable if female, and if not – direct interactions with female friends, partners, sisters or mother figures in the male participants' immediate circles) as well as understanding participants' observations and perspectives of how society positioned female musicians and females holistically at the time. Additionally, and since context is extremely important to the two themes above, discussion of participants descriptions of society at the time (from left to right politics, schooling, opportunities afforded or denied by social class and personal circumstances) framed the analysis. Finally, I examined (and revisited) the 'dominant narrative' of punk and post-punk and consider who (in the respondents' opinion) might be considered as actors or "memory entrepreneurs" of this narrative (Jones 2017: 29).

The participants were categorized by their engagement and identification with punk and post-punk (Fig 1). Not all participants necessarily identified with punk/post-punk entirely, instead possessing varying degrees of engagement and/or interest with it. Figure 1 represents 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' to show this. An 'A' participant was a member of a post-punk band during 78-84 (though not originally intended, this was a direct consequence of the snowball sample, and seemed like an excellent opportunity to collect data about the Leeds post-punk scene in particular.) Two members of band Stiff Little Fingers were interviewed, as was one member of Leeds band the Mekons. 'B' participants considered themselves to be directly involved with punk or post-punk youth cultures, and actively sought to reproduce it through either their personal identity or musical activities during the late 1970s and 1980s. 'B' participants, by definition, seized a heightened passion for punk or post-punk, engaging with it more as a lifestyle – both culturally and musically. 'C' participants were considered neutral towards punk and post-punk, who neither rejected it nor significantly took it up. This includes participants who directly cited having not engaged in punk or post-punk (musically and/or culturally) as much as they wish they could have, for example, asserting they look back now feeling their musical tastes were far too narrow, or lamenting they missed out on the culture for a number of reasons. 'D' participants were those who actively rejected or resisted punk and post-punk, whether through having strict parents who discouraged engagement or whose personal beliefs prevented them from wanting to engage with it.

Figure 1: Degrees of Involvement with Punk and Post-Punk



A Member of a post-punk band 78-84

B Reproduced punk/post-punk scene

C Neutral feelings towards punk/post-punk scene

D Resisted punk/post-punk scene

Terminology – Scene, Subculture, Identity, Genre, Era, Movement?

Terminology was an interesting feature after only a handful of interviews. Of the twenty participants, three referred to it as a scene, two as a movement, six as a youth culture or subculture, two as a genre, and nine as an era (referencing a time period). When asked about punk and post-punk openly, a number of participants asked for clarification with regards to referencing culture or music, which in turn revealed yet more terminology.

Many associated punk and post-punk more with ‘youth cultures’ (M1, M2, M4, M7, M8, M10) such as ‘hardcore punks’, ‘oi punks’, ‘skinheads’, ‘mods’, ‘scooters’, ‘teddy boys’, ‘peri-boys.’ Participants described their interactions, observations, or personal engagements with some of these (or all) groups, and many considered them as schisms within (or against) punk and post-punk; by reciting animosity amongst each of them, or at least a clear divide;

M2: ‘Everyone’s a bit homogenized now, in the way that they dress [...] People in the past would identify themselves with their music and their fashion, and it would be an inclusive thing, it would be we’re this and you’re that.’

M7: ‘It was quite polarized, and people were either mod or a punk or into rock or whatever, and it was quite violent [...] if you went to a concert, you could get hit for wearing the wrong clothes!’

M10: ‘I went to an all-boys school, and you were either into one of two things: Genesis... Pink Floyd... stuff like that, or black music (reggae and motown.)’

M1: ‘When you first become interested in a subculture, you listen to the popular bands. The rough end of skinhead music was oi music. Oi bands, you’d go to a gig, for a fight, very rough, some band making awful noise on stage [...] It wasn’t music, it was an experience.’

However, M8, who cited having seen over ‘4000 gigs,’ and had engaged with punk and post-punk through both youth cultures and later his job issuing tickets for punk gigs in Manchester, felt differently about some of the schisms within punk and post-punk youth cultures, asserting it was only *some* groups that would cause trouble;

M8: ‘Manchester had lots of different cults... Punks, skinheads, mods, you could go to a gig and everyone would get on. There was never any trouble apart from [with] peri

boys, disco boys, and occasionally skinheads. Teddy boys hated punks with a vengeance.'

This account echoes subcultural literature (Hebdige 1991; Bennett 2000) in placing groups – particularly working-class male youth – according to genre and style. Interestingly, one participant (having also cited these youth cultures) added that they did not feel to him, to be very genuine;

M10: 'We weren't really skinheads, we were *pretend* skinheads. You mimic the style because you like the music, [but] skinheads were something that was going on somewhere else that you had just seen on black and white TV. [...] [and] when I was at uni [there were] people about Cambridge pretending to be punk rockers.'

Secondly, participants linked punk and post-punk as more genres of music, by referencing bands that in their opinion, were associated with it. Furthermore, many found it useful to describe the genres of punk and post-punk by dichotomising them against other genres of music, such as: pop, disco, 'Eurovisiony' (M10), glam rock, prog rock, rock, and new romantic;

F2: 'There was Toyah, she was coming off punk [...] There's Debbie Harry and Siouxsie and the Banshees, then there's the pappy pop music like Abba.'

F9: 'The Bangles seemed more cool, Bananarama seemed more poppy.'

F4: 'We would listen to Rock: Santana, Free, the Stones, but my brother was in a punk band so I did listen to that.'

F3: '[I listened to] the Rezillos, the Slits, X-Ray Spex, Poly Styrene, Siouxsie [...] It was rebellion against fashion, against Abba and pop music.'

It is interesting how these genre and band descriptions still echo a musical (and in turn, social) divide, as discussed earlier by participants who described punk and post-punk as 'youth cults' (M7). This negotiation of musical space through style and genre descriptions by the participants suggests that the former was synonymous with differing values which they held importance to and that this as a result, had the ability to direct their musical choices. Arguing genre further, some participants felt that punk and post-punk were more umbrella terms, for what was actually a diverse range of music. Some especially, described a shift in what ought to be termed as 'punk' and what 'post-punk';

M6: 'Post-punk is sort of the umbrella term [...] even new wave [...] might be what came to be post-punk. If I use a metaphor, post-punk is the supermarket, and you have all these departments [like] electro, punk, power pop, melodic punk.'

This in turn raised many points about identity, as participants were keen to express what they thought punk and post-punk were *not*, as much as what they felt it *was*;

M5: '[I identified with] punk new wave [...] the later punk, [because] the hardcore punk [...] wasn't punk in my eyes. Mine was more the melodic stuff – the Police, the Clash, those sorts of bands.'

M4: 'It wasn't the hardcore punk *imitates fast tempo guitar* it was more the art school punk I was into.'

M7: 'Early stuff [like] the Clash, the Sex Pistols, quite soon though, punk changed [...] post-punk came along; like Magazine, the Cure, Joy Division – who were obviously not punk, but came from punk.'

Their descriptions reveal a lot about identity and self-identification, because although much punk and post-punk literature 'boxes off' certain bands as early/late punk, as new wave, as positive punk, as art/intellectual punk and so on, it is clear from the participants comments that these all had social implications (just as with the 'youth cults' described earlier) which brought with them associated political ideologies, fashions, and notions of social class. Aside from discussing identity obliquely through terminology, participants also confronted it directly;

M7: 'People were drawing from different fashion and music culture, it was so creative. It gave people an identity, but the identity did leave people open to aggression.'

M1: 'We didn't like punks, that was a middle-class affection, certainly in London. Here in Leeds, punk and goth were working class communities [...] in London it was middle class Daddy's rebellion.'

M9: 'The Gang of Four sang about fashionable tropes of politics for intelligent well-read lefty artists.'

These comments seem to reiterate Kruse's discussion of subcultural identity, where she attested: 'senses of shared identity are alliances formed out of oppositional stances' (Kruse 1993: 34).

However, F3 argued differently, 'It didn't matter...everyone had anger. Everyone came from a similar up the revolution background... it definitely united people!'

Thirdly, participants described punk and post-punk in terms of the fashions, describing their observations or engagement with the style.

F6: 'The punk dress style [...] you did it yourself, you 'punked up' something [...] my friend pierced her ear with a safety pin.'

M3: 'I couldn't understand the spikey hair and the zips in the trousers.'

F5: 'We used to see the punk rockers walking around the town, with their mohicans and green hair and tattoos [...] they looked quite scary. I'm sure they were quite pleasant though!'

M2: 'For lots of people, punks being one example, the music you listen to with friends was how you dressed.'

Some of the participants disagreed with the 'standard' rhetoric of punk style, citing the cost of clothes as a barrier, and consequently dismissing the style out of financial practicality.

F4: 'No one dressed up [...] you wore whatever you had, none of us had a great deal of money!'

F3: 'We would just wear things from charity shops [...] the whole punk thing seemed to evolve into this Sex shop and bondage trousers and Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood [but] we didn't.'

M8: 'We just dressed down, we didn't have any clothes to dress up in. We had ripped jeans because your jeans were ripped!'

Contrary to some literature on the history of punk fashion (Sirc 1997; Crossley 2008) it would appear that it did not apply to all who engaged with punk and post-punk culturally (in fact, the participants that made these comments fall into the 'B' and 'C' categories). This only solidifies the notion that not all of punk was for shock and show; it was a lifestyle choice which held other appeals to young people – pertinently, the music.

Gender, Femininity & Women



Figure 2: Siouxsie Sioux on the cover of *NME*, 17 April 1982.

Figure 3: Pauline Murray on the cover of *NME*, 11 November 1978.

Figure 4: *Women in Rock* cover of *NME*, 3 March 1980.

Some pictures were used during the interview as memory prompts, two of which are shown above. Participants had mixed feelings about these photos; especially Figure 2. Some stated the outright blatant sexualisation of Siouxsie, whilst some referenced re-appropriation of femininity and empowerment. Others dismissed the image as a career move, and one participant mused what it might imply the music to sound like.

M1: [on Fig.2.] 'She's a body.'

M2: [on Fig.2.] 'I suspect if you ask Siouxsie now, she would say she was deconstructing it and taking ownership of it, appropriating [femininity and sexuality] on her own terms.'

M9: [on Fig.2.] 'Siouxsie yeah, an appalling thing to do [...] it was to get on the cover! I don't even think women had to do that to get noticed [...] in terms of their career it was a sensible move, but in terms of what it was doing for women [...] I thought it was very retrograde. [on Fig.3] Now that's much better, a human being, being a human first, and not an objectified woman! But Pauline was quite non-fashion.'

F1: [on Fig.2.] 'It's provocative, I wonder what the music sounds like? I guess they're trying to get people to buy it.'



Figure 5: The Slits on the cover *NME*, 8 September 1979.

Figure 6: The Cramps on the cover *NME*, 23 June 1979.

Other interview prompts (Fig. 4, Fig 5) enacted participants to further discuss notions of femininity, and in particular the subversion of traditional femininity. This included references to feminism, and remarks of women's (often stereotyped) physical appearances. Examples of feminine identities were also discussed, such as page three models and 'groupies.' From their responses, it would appear that a lot of pre-conceptualized ideas of women's appearances existed at the time.

F2: [On Fig.5] 'I couldn't have even told you this was a female band, it just looks like three women with no clothes on, [like] page three and all that crap!'

M7: [On Fig.6] 'That's Poison Ivy from the Cramps, I loved them. She wore clothes on stage like a bikini, it wasn't a sexual thing though – it was more, taking the piss out of it all.'

M9: 'I preferred the Au Pairs, their single was called equal but different, which says it all! They were strong feminists. I [also] really liked Poison Ivy, I didn't mind that she used those tropes of objectified femininity and [a] sleazy showgirl [look,] because you just know she is in control of it, she is not being taken by it. Though, when people say now how "empowered" they are [...] are you fuck, you've just internalized your oppression!'

F4: 'There was one girl in our group who got really offended because people thought she

was an art student, she had a fur coat, bleached her hair, and wore nice make up and jewellery.'

These comments seem to discuss expectations and negotiations of femininity, as debated in literature by Whiteley (1997) and Leonard (2007).

Gender Identity & Patriarchy

Though some direct questions were asked regarding gender during the interviews, many participants referenced this of their own volition. These opinions were varied; with some common themes appearing. For example, a number of participants were outright in stating the patriarchy they felt existed in the music industry. Pertinently, both female and male participants made comments like this.

F2: 'I think women were still largely regarded below men [...] some women were higher up, like Debbie Harry or Siouxsie and the Banshees – but they still had men behind them. [Even] Abba, where there were two pretty women and two men. The women were still secondary to the men then.'

M10: 'To be fair, female musicians were fairly thin on the ground [...] girl bands were almost unheard of.'

M2: 'Women were vastly underrepresented. Thinking about it, the only genre we get female representation is folk, or singer-songwriters, you know, its seen as gentle and lady like. No one's going to pay to see women rocking, that's boy's stuff! You can almost see the record label selling "all girl bands" [as a] novelty. [Record Labels] Let's get a girl band, as opposed to, they make good music and they're girls!'

M4: 'It was a male dominant scene because all of the music industry was male, it's just how it was. There weren't many women involved, the whole world then was still a bit "men over here" and "women over there."

However, other participants were more positive about sexism in the music industry and discussed what they felt were women making a stand against it.

F7: 'Blondie was giving it big licks out there with the blokes, doing what they were doing, and representing the girlies in a great way [...] I was watching something the other day

about her influence with a record that brought hip hop into mainstream culture. And Mel and Kim [...] they were two black girlies who brought a positive vibe, they [were very] we can do it! Girl power! Pre-Spice Girl power!' [laughs]

M7: 'It [post punk] was shining a light on it all, trying to expose behaviours that weren't acceptable. A great Banshees song called 'Peek a Boo', was about that – girls being used. That's why it was depressing when the 80s came in; plastic pop came in, and bands like Duran Duran did songs like 'Girls on Film', seeming to publicize and to approve of using women in that light.'

However, when discussing women in society rather than the music industry specifically (such as women in participants' social circles or mutual friends) comments indicated the opposite to patriarchy.

M5: '[...] in my eyes women were taken seriously, whether they were for the music industry I don't know.'

F4: 'to our course friends, in science [...] We were seen as very equal.'

M4: '[...] I had a girlfriend who played saxophone, and she was welcomed into playing in bands, there was never any "ohhh she's a woman!" It was just, she plays the saxophone so, you can come along you know!'

Some participants also discussed gender roles in general, emphasising perceived societal expectations of men and women at the time.

F7: 'My Dad died when I was 14, so there was just me and my Mum. After that, it was a united girly front, we had to crack on! If the lightbulb needed changing or a screw fell out or something, we had it do it, there was no bloke [...] it was not that culture of there was a man of the house to do it, we just did it.'

F3: 'I remember youth clubs in York, it was gangs of boys and gangs of girls stood waiting to be asked to dance at discos and stuff. It wasn't oppressive, but it was just, the way it was! I never knew any different.'

It would appear from some of the comments that gender oppression was somewhat societally ingrained, especially from a music industry point of view; which only acted as a catalyst for some

female artists to subvert it. Comparatively, participants did not feel at street level that such patriarchy was necessarily prevalent, aside from F3's comment, which seems to suggest stereotyped gender roles (at a disco) on a societal and institutional level.

Memory & the “Dominant Narrative”, punk and post-punk “actors”

This study used memory as a lens through which to conduct its analyses, and interestingly, is an idea that some participants commented upon directly, and unprompted, during the interview.

F3: ‘My memory gets a bit hazy, we were only girls [then], like 17 or 18, it’s difficult to recall those times now without putting my 57-year-old memory and brain on, because obviously now I have a different political stance, and all of those things have evolved and changed over time.’

F6: ‘It was a long time ago and there’s a lot in my head. I just think as times passes, I can’t jog my memory anymore.’

M2: ‘My memories are of where I lived and things. But of social revolutions and media representations, for the majority of people [life] was routine like any other thing. One history for Mick Jagger and Paul McCartney and Hendrix, and there’s an entirely different experience for the rest of the people in the country. Now I’m older I can see, ones’ experience of their history is different of that which is presented to you through media.’

M6: ‘History tends to change things when its written down, especially if it’s written by somebody who wasn’t there!’

Though all of the participants came from entirely different backgrounds, and have different personal demographics, these comments seemed to remain in my mind; pertinent to how I, as a researcher, considered all of the responses from all participants. Certainly, comments on history by M6, encouraged me to question further just how much a “dominant narrative” of punk and post-punk has unfolded since the late 1970s.

Whilst a common thread of mention was indeed the Sex Pistols – many cited the media and Malcolm McLaren’s sheer manipulation of them as more significant than the band themselves. This is with the exception of, participants M8 and M9 ([...] the Pistols gig in Leeds, we went to that. It was after that that we said to each other – well can do that, let’s make a band!); who cited the Sex Pistols as raw inspiration for their involvement in the punk and post-punk culture. In fact, live music with friends as a concept, was considered as the go-to social activity by nearly all participants

and *the* social activity which they would spend their money on (even if they had very little). This was indiscriminate of local or 'big' bands and significance was instead placed on the very notion of spending time as friends in pubs, university bars, and other venues hearing live music.

F1: 'I saw Siouxsie and the Banshees live at the Polytechnic.'

F7: 'I saw lots of live music at uni, I can't remember who I saw, it was just like "we're going to a gig."

F3: '[...] seeing living bands 'is all we ever did [...] Just local bands [who were] touring!'

F4: 'we used money for going to concerts.'

Considering the media again, those who mentioned newspapers always described the 'shock' of punk or the Sex Pistols, and in nearly all cases; the infamous Bill Grundy television interview with Johnny Rotten swearing. Many insisted it was the making of punk and termed the Sex Pistols as the media's newest craze to write about at the time. Surrounding context of the 1970s and 1980s always accompanied these descriptions, with some arguing the pertinence of understanding the social politics of the time in shaping how society was.

M8: 'John Peel gave loads of access [to music.] When the Sex Pistols played Electric Circus [...] it was phenomenal, it was day zero for me. I remember the Bill Grundy show when John Lydon swore on TV. That's when the media took it up. The media hated [punks], they were scared the death. The whole country was for about a year.'

F9: 'But no-no-no we can't have people swearing on television! My god we had never heard the F word!'

M7: 'When I first saw it [punk] in a Sunday paper, it was portrayed in a shock journalist way. It's hard to imagine the cultural shock now actually.'

M2: 'Malcolm McLaren knew exactly what to say and do to get publicity.'

M1: 'The political context is very important. I don't think people correlate the two [music and politics], but when you look at the swings in music, you see the political contexts. You can see the thrust and friction.'

M10: 'It [punk and post punk] certainly was a reaction to the world at the time.'

These comments may justify some of the dominant narrative of punk and post punk as reflective of class culture and politics, as the participants stress the absolute importance of society at the time.

When considering Jones' discussion of 'memory entrepreneurs', (Jones 2017: 29) one might consider commonly associated bands or notable figures named by the participants as examples of these. Some included: the Sex Pistols, the Clash, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Malcolm McLaren, Vivienne Westwood. However, even when considering the participants depictions of the media puppeteering the Sex Pistols, some additionally refuted them as a spearhead band of punk at all; and named other bands they felt had more significance.

M8: 'Pistols weren't king of punk. John Lydon and the manager were important in promoting punk in this country, but it was already there in America and underground pockets of this country.'

M6: 'The first punk record I ever heard was the Stranglers first single. I heard that before I heard 'Anarchy in the UK', because it wasn't played on the radio.'

M2: 'If people had been to Vivienne Westwood's SEX shop in the punk era, [that version of history] was true for Johnny Rotten, but for most people it wasn't even close to that. But it sells books, films, it's interesting to talk about.'

M10: 'It wasn't just all about Johnny Rotten and the Sex Pistols. They were a vehicle to make a lot of promotion and money.'

F1: 'People were still popping pills and drinking alcohol, they were rebelling in their own way even if they didn't dress like punks.'

M4: 'You saw the headlines [...] Sex Pistol outrage [...] but my parents didn't buy into it really, my father was a musician and he understood how it was showbiz really.'

What strikes me most about these comments is not only the blatant non-defence of the Pistols, but F1's comments about rebellion regardless of punk. It would appear from the above comments that punk and post-punk's complex and myriad journey as a scene, subculture, genre, era and movement has superseded such labels.

Conclusion & Recommendations

When examining the diverse responses of twenty participants; I am fascinated by the stories I have been told. A number of points strike me as significant from these participants. Most pertinently, is the sheer significance and importance of music to their lives as young people; whether they identified with post-punk or not. Consider participants such as M2 and M3, who were so proud of their eclectic musical tastes that they cited music as their identity only for their love of music in

general. Meanwhile, participants such as F3 and F6 saw liberal freedom in punk and post-punk and viewed music as endlessly uniting and focal to their social lives. Or the analytical reflections of M2 and M7, who asserted their thoughts on the social context of the 70's and 80's with such strong viewpoints against sexism and patriarchy, along with how they felt the music industry played their part in this. Additionally, are participants such as M5, M6, and M9, who were so inspired by what they saw of punk, that they formed bands themselves to be a part of it – regardless of its profile as a scene, subculture, genre, era, or movement, there was nothing that would outweigh the *feeling* being in that band gave them.

And whether progress has been made in the name of gender equality (whether in the music industry or more holistically) what can be surmised from the responses – is that people (if only twenty!) do remember, respect, and relish female musicians. Participants name them, discuss their achievements, describe why they loved their music and are proud of their work. They highlight areas of society (such as the music industry) where women have been taken advantage of, surmising their own opinions of whether those who subverted notions of femininity advanced women's equality or not and, importantly, praise the ones who did. As for the dominant narrative of safety pins and Sex Pistols; the participants could not wholly reach a consensus on whether the band were as pinnacle as literary history suggests. However, I cannot shake M8's 'Pistol's weren't king of Punk,' from my mind, along with other participants' suggestive references to 'showbiz' (M4) and outright assessments of McLaren's careful manoeuvring of Punk (M2) (M7).

As I return myself to the present, I remain sold that memories truly are, strange things. Like layers of an onion, how many guises does a memory go through as it is told time and time again, through one lens after another? What I have learned from this study is that, to some degree, this is not of significance – for it is the *meaning* and *feeling* those memories provide which reveal their true calibre. And if this sounds doubtful, I will depart with F3's words, who like many participants; questioned their memories as they told them.

F3: 'In my memory [post punk] is static. But memories are strange, you reconstruct them every time you recall them. It makes me think, is this real, or is it a narrative that I gave it?'

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ⁱ The research adhered to Leeds Beckett University's (2017) policy for ethical research, and respondents (in addition to receiving participant information) acknowledged and signed a consent

form which reminded them of their voluntary consent and anonymity. Participants were named M1-10 and F1-10, though 3 agreed to non-anonymity in consenting to the name of their respective post-punk bands being included. Data collection data was stored safely on a password protected laptop and was backed up in password protected Dropbox and Gmail accounts.